

**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

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**AN ASSESSMENT OF
STRATEGIC NAVAL LEADER COMPETENCIES**

BY

COMMANDER MICHAEL A. STRANO
United States Navy

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

CDR Michael A. Strano
United States Navy

Dr. Herbert Barber
Project Advisor

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: CDR Michael A. Strano, USN

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This is a study of the strategic leadership attributes of Fleet Admirals Nimitz and King. This Strategy Research Project will compare their attributes to an established list of strategic leader competencies and analyze any common trends. This paper will study any influences during their careers (assignments, mentors, experiences) that shaped them into the type of strategic leaders they became. Finally, any commonalities among them will be determined and applied to officers of today preparing to be the successful strategic leaders of tomorrow.

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AN ASSESSMENT OF STRATEGIC NAVAL LEADER COMPETENCIES

For many decades, men have searched for a magic formula for leadership. Volumes have been written in an attempt to describe those personal qualities that kindle the spark of inspiration among others in great human undertakings. But a master equation has not yet been evolved, because leadership is a product of many variables – among them human character, individual personality, and the times and circumstances in which men live.

— Fleet Admiral William F. Halsey, USN¹

Fleet Admiral Halsey's statement in 1959 is just as true, if not more today. As the United States military moved away from the draft to the all volunteer force in the 1970's and increased competition between large American corporations changed with the emergence of smaller companies in the 1980's and 1990's, strategic leadership has become a topic elevated to the forefront and widely discussed and debated. A large part of the debate questions whether leadership is a born natural ability, or can a person learn how to be a successful leader? While one cannot find a textbook equation that solves all leadership problems, a review of many written works reveals that there appear to be certain competencies inherent in successful leaders.

As the United States' military enters the 21st century, it finds itself in a period of what many may call a strategic pause. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the end of the Cold War, the United States finds itself with no peer adversary. Rather than the threat being manifested in the large Soviet Union, today's many threats are spread across a diverse spectrum. Numerous think tanks are writing articles for publication and newspapers concerning the possible future threat of China and Iran's growing military capabilities.² To a historian, this period of time is comparable to the inner war years between World War I and World War II. It was during those years that the U.S. Navy's greatest strategic leaders of World War II were developed. Is the United States developing the strategic leaders today that it will need in a future conflict with a major adversary in the future? What competencies do tomorrow's strategic leaders need to possess to succeed in such a diverse world? Can officers learn leadership, or are they doomed to failure because they were not inherently born with it?

This paper will attempt to define strategic leadership by reviewing the competencies that successful strategic leaders both inside and outside the military possess today. The leadership characteristics of World War II Naval leaders Fleet Admirals Ernest King and Chester Nimitz will be studied and compared to the list of competencies established. Any influences in their careers to include assignments, mentors, and experiences that may have shaped them into

successful strategic leaders will be studied. Finally, any common threads between them that made them successful strategic leaders of the Navy during a particularly difficult period of American history will be drawn and applied to today's officers as they prepare to be the strategic leaders of tomorrow. Were they successful because of their abilities, or just because the country was at war and they were lucky to be at the right place at the right time?

WHAT IS A STRATEGIC LEADER?

"It became clear to me that at the age of 58 I would have to learn new tricks that were not taught in the military manuals or on the battlefield. In this position I am a political soldier and will have to put my training in rapping-out orders and making snap decisions on the back burner, and have to learn the arts of persuasion and guile. I must become an expert in a whole new set of skills."

— George C. Marshall, General, U.S. Army³

General George Marshall realized that he needed to learn a whole new style of leadership at the strategic level. His ability to adapt and desire to learn, even at age 58, is what made him one of our greatest military leaders. There are three levels of leadership in the military: direct leadership, organizational leadership, and strategic leadership. The U.S. Army War College defines strategic leadership as the process used by a leader to affect the achievement of a desirable and clearly understood vision by influencing the organizational culture, allocating resources, directing through policy and directive, and building consensus within a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous global environment which is marked by opportunities and threats.⁴

Many officers rise through the ranks in organizational leadership positions and use direct leadership on a daily basis. A select few are chosen to make the transition to the strategic leadership level of the Navy; a transition from an environment of well-defined responsibilities to one with no clear-cut textbook solutions that is continuously changing. Rather than executing policy, the strategic leader makes policy for the good of the entire organization.⁵

WHAT ARE SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIC LEADER COMPETENCIES?

Competencies are skills that a strategic leader possesses which are necessary to be successful. They can be grouped into conceptual, technical, and interpersonal competencies. Aspiring leaders and most everyone are fascinated by what makes people successful. One can

read about leadership almost daily in newspapers or magazines. A Newsweek article on Vice President Dick Cheney described him as a man who can “take a problem, work it through and move things to a desired conclusion.” He is a “self effacing man where indiscretion and self-promotion are high crimes in his world.” It goes on to describe him as a “faithful subordinate and ultimate insider where loyalty and team play count for just about everything.” The Vice President “projects calm and confidence.”⁶ More recently upon his nomination to be the next Secretary of Defense, the New York Times wrote a piece describing Donald Rumsfeld’s characteristics. The article states that both Vice President Cheney and Secretary Rumsfeld have a “results-driven, no-nonsense management style.” They both “value candor and decisiveness.” President George W. Bush stated that Secretary Rumsfeld “did an extraordinary job with a delicate assignment.”⁷ His “ability to develop a consensus on controversial issues is a key to his management style.”⁸

In 1988, Rumsfeld himself described six core traits he thought were necessary to be a successful President of the United States, a strategic leader. He wrote that a President must set priorities, know the importance of selecting the right people for key positions, must lead by consent, not command (emphasizing his ability to persuade, not order), have a moral compass, have guts at important moments, and possess as small a gap as possible between what the President is and what the people think he is.⁹

In May of 1999, Worth Financial Intelligence Magazine identified what they believed to be 50 of the best Chief Executive Officers (CEO) of corporations they could find. They found all shared certain key traits: vision, an ability to focus, a willingness to take strategic risks, and an unwavering belief in themselves and their companies.¹⁰

Gordon Bethune, CEO of Continental Airlines, wrote a book called “From Worst to First: Gordon Bethune’s Story of Continental Airlines’ Comeback” in which he described how he changed Continental Airlines.¹¹ Herb Kelleher, Chairman, President and CEO of Southwest Airlines states Bethune’s bottom line “is all about people. Gordon Bethune walks the talk!” In other words, he practices what he preaches.¹²

In Dr. Wess Robert’s book “Leadership Secrets of Attila The Hun,” he states a fundamental definition that all successful leaders should live by. “Leadership is a privilege to have the responsibility of other people and their welfare.”¹³ Many successful leaders at the direct and organizational leadership levels fail to make the leap to the strategic level because they forget this very important definition. Winning a coveted leadership position is a privilege and a responsibility to those who helped the leader get to that position, not a right to be used for self promotion.

Stephen R. Covey, the founder of the Covey Leadership Center, has written several books on leadership. His first, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* first outlined his recipe for success.¹⁴ Another of his books, "Principle-Centered Leadership," outlines four levels of leadership with corresponding principles: trustworthiness at the personal level; trust at the interpersonal level; empowerment at the management level; and a leader doesn't supervise, people supervise themselves.¹⁵ With alignment and trust, Covey states "people are supervising themselves which enables a leader's span of control to be large because no micromanagement is necessary. They do their jobs because they want to because of the emotional bank of trust you built with them."^{16 17}

Donald T. Phillips wrote two books on leadership in changing times drawing principles from America's founding fathers and Abraham Lincoln. In "The Founding Fathers on Leadership", Phillips states that the first step in the change process involves raising awareness, getting the message out by spontaneous natural process, by design, and by necessity. Creating a simple, clear vision, setting goals, and involving everyone are cornerstones. Phillips' list of competencies derived from our founding fathers is quite extensive and is included in the endnotes.¹⁸ What separates his work from others is the element of leading in the strategic environment of change. As you read the list, you will see that every successful leader realizes he or she cannot do it by themselves, and has to surround themselves with successful people. The one thing that stands out is the principle of allowing people to learn from their mistakes. This encourages people to take risks that will improve the organization. This competency in our Naval strategic leaders in World War II was important to winning the war. This competency is scarce in a peacetime military.

Phillips' book "Lincoln on Leadership: Executive Strategies for Tough Times" is probably one of the most popular books written on leadership. Ten days before Lincoln took office, the Confederate states seceded from the Union. "Lincoln, who was elected by a minority of the popular vote, was viewed by his own advisors as nothing more than a gawky, second-rate country lawyer with no leadership experience." How did Lincoln become our "most honored and revered President?" Again, was it skill, or the timing of the Civil War? Clearly, if the Civil War were lost, Lincoln would have been the last President of the United States and a total failure. He used strategic leadership skills that no one at the time thought he had to achieve victory and maintain the Union. Lincoln was "innovative, compassionate and caring, yet when necessary, could put his foot down firmly and be decisive beyond question. He was patient, persistent, consistent, and persuasive rather than dictatorial."¹⁹

Another President is often mentioned for his leadership abilities. While there are those that criticize him for being detached and not being a micromanager in this modern, fast-paced environment, many believe Ronald Reagan had the right leadership style for the strategic environment. James Strock's book "Reagan on Leadership: Executive Lessons From the Great Communicator" outlines Reagan's strategic leader competencies.²⁰

James Kouzes and Barry Posner²¹ are both speakers and consultants to various corporations. Together, they have conducted much research in the area of strategic leadership and have written the book "The Leadership Challenge." Based on their research, they have come up with what they call five fundamental practices of exemplary leadership. They are: challenge the process, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, model the way, and encourage the heart. They found that people expect their leaders to be honest, forward-looking, inspiring, competent, and possess the ability to put it all together with creditability.²²

In the 1970's, W. Edwards Deming developed his 14 points to successful leadership, which he called Total Quality Management.²³ By 1990, the Navy incorporated Deming's 14 points and changed the name to Total Quality Leadership (TQL).²⁴ Whether organizations like the Navy were talking about Tom Peter's "In Search for Excellence" and "Thriving on Chaos," Deming's TQM, Stephen Covey's "paradigm shifts", or whatever leadership fad of the time, the one thing that has remained constant is the fact that even though the names keep changing every so many years, leadership fascinates corporations, companies, the government and the American people.

A REVIEW OF SUCCESSFUL NAVAL STRATEGIC LEADERS

FLEET ADMIRAL CHESTER NIMITZ

Later I came to know Nimitz, and when I saw him in action I understood the sources from which unusual intellectual powers came. He was a well-disciplined man, but not rigid. He was willing to take a chance but was never flamboyant, He could look single facts in the eye and decide what they were worth, and he could assemble multiplex facts and make them yield a conclusion.

— James Michener, author²⁵

Fleet Admiral (FADM) Nimitz created command excellence in every command he was a part of. He did not broadcast his expectations, but conveyed them subtly to his officers. He demanded excellence not for his sake, but for the sake of the men themselves and their own pride and self-fulfillment. Nimitz graduated from the Naval Academy and rose through the ranks

to become Commander in Chief of the Pacific during World War II and then Chief of Naval Operations. He became one of the most successful strategic leaders the Navy has seen.

Nimitz was greatly influenced by his grandfather, Charles H. Nimitz, a German immigrant who served in the German Merchant Marine and settled in Fredericksburg, Texas. Grandfather Nimitz told him “the sea... like life itself... is a stern taskmaster, the best way to get along with either is to learn all you can, then do your best and don’t worry... especially over things over which you have no control.”²⁶ Nimitz used this philosophy at every stage of his career allowing him to overcome any obstacles in his path. As a child raised by his mother and grandfather, he learned many useful traits that helped him later in life. He learned to have patience, a sense of humor that withstood adversity, and an ability to accurately evaluate people.²⁷

Nimitz graduated from the Naval Academy in the Class of 1905.²⁸ Nimitz believed early command of a small ship would teach him self-reliance and confidence. While in command of PANAY, there was a war scare with Japan and he was summoned to Manila Bay, Philippines where he was told he would take command of an old decommissioned destroyer, the DECATUR, which was moored to a buoy in the harbor. He was 22 years old and an Ensign at the time.²⁹

On July 7, 1909, Nimitz was bringing his destroyer into Batangas Harbor, south of Manila. He became a little careless and ran aground. When he could not get DECATUR off the bank, he remembered what his grandfather taught him; “don’t worry about things over which you have no control,” so he set up a cot on deck and went to sleep. The next morning a passing small steamer towed DECATUR to port. He was relieved of command and court-martialed. The charges were reduced because of his flawless record and the poor charts of the harbor. Someone had the insight to see that Nimitz was destined for greatness and decided to preserve his career. He was assigned to return to the states and take submarine duty, which in those days was considered hardship duty that was not career enhancing. Though disappointed, he immersed himself in his work and had several experiences (including command of three submarines) that would later make him a better leader.³⁰

As a Lieutenant Commander, he was sent to build a submarine base at Pearl Harbor. There was no equipment or supplies and the local commanding officers, all senior to Nimitz, refused to assist him. He worked around this through his “mastered art of persuasion.” Building this base gave Nimitz’s career a boost. He was rewarded with a promotion to Commander and was sent to the Naval War College.³¹

Earlier in his career, he was assigned as an engineering aide to Captain Samuel S. Robison, Commander, Submarine Force Atlantic Fleet.³² Later after his duty at the war college,

now Admiral Robison was assigned as Commander in Chief, Battle Fleet and asked Nimitz to be his aide, assistant chief of staff, and tactical officer.³³

Together, they participated in many fleet experiments with the new aircraft carriers and when Robison was appointed as Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, he kept Nimitz as his aide and tactical officer. Many believe his jobs with Admiral Robison were some of the most important assignments that were instrumental in getting him prepared for senior command. Nimitz however believed his job, as one of six officers to establish the first NROTC units in American universities was the most challenging.³⁴

In 1935, Nimitz was a Captain and assigned as the assistant to the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation in Washington, DC.^{35 36} In 1938, Nimitz was promoted to Rear Admiral and took command of Battleship Division ONE on the west coast. In early 1939, he received orders to return to Washington to become the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation where he remained until December 1941.

There is little in Nimitz's record of assignments to suggest that he should be the one picked over 28 more senior officers to assume the duties as Commander in Chief, Pacific after Pearl Harbor. Some believe President Roosevelt and Secretary Knox picked him because he had shown himself to be a talented administrator and "was noted for making do with next to nothing."³⁷

Nimitz had formed and polished his strategic leader competencies throughout his career. His ability to make friends worked for him and provided a backdrop for his success. He studied people, learned their strengths and weaknesses, and their talent for leadership. He took pride in helping officers under him get good assignments. In today's language, he took care of his people and they took care of him. His seniors knew that he was able to get along with people. He had a low-key approach to life and maintained a behind-the-scenes posture while doing an outstanding job in every assignment. He was the equivalent to the role Vice President Cheney plays in the George W. Bush administration. President Roosevelt and Secretary Knox needed a man with a controlled balance in life to produce confidence and motivation after the catastrophe of Pearl Harbor.^{38 39}

Nimitz believed that sound strategy is based on knowledge, information, and technical experience. He gave an order and relied on his men to do what they thought best under a given situation. He once said "horses pull harder when the reins lie loose."⁴⁰ Nimitz kept his door open to his men. He believed that the best ideas did not come from the top, but often from the men in battle.⁴¹

Admiral Nimitz acted as a buffer between the caustic Admiral King, the Chief of Naval Operations and Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet and his subordinates: "Bull" Halsey, "Terrible" Turner, and "Howling Mad" Smith.⁴² ⁴³ One of Nimitz's most important jobs became assigning personnel. He personified the ability to strategically select the right people for the right assignment. He believed that small details could make the difference between success and failure.⁴⁴ ⁴⁵

Nimitz believed in providing messages of encouragement, consolation and reassurance when things did not go well until the entire matter had been thoroughly investigated to ensure against injustice. When Admiral Nimitz had to relieve Vice Admiral Ghormley of command because the South Pacific battles in the Guadalcanal region were failing, he replaced him with Halsey, who he knew would infuse a new sense of purpose and morale.⁴⁶ ⁴⁷

When Rear Admiral Fletcher's abilities were in question, as with Vice Admiral Ghormley, King ordered them to report to Washington after being relieved to "look them over." It was his way of seeing just what was wrong which usually added to the misery.⁴⁸

King often grew impatient with the pace of the war in the South Pacific and proposed plans to outflank the Japanese. Nimitz and Halsey thought it should proceed step by step without skipping any steps. Nimitz would fly to meet King in San Francisco and brief him on his plans. To his credit, King always fully accepted Nimitz's proposals and promised to help him any way he could. This is further testament to Nimitz's abilities to persuade even the most difficult of personalities.

Nimitz could put in long hours of work, but he refused to immerse himself in details that his subordinates could manage. He believed in the art of delegation and would delegate as much as his people could handle.⁴⁹ ⁵⁰

President Harry Truman found Fleet Admiral Nimitz to be "honest, competent, and without pretense" in his meeting with him to determine if he would be the next CNO. After Nimitz's death, Truman wrote, "I came to regard Admiral Nimitz from the outset as a man apart and above all his contemporaries – as a strategist, as a leader and as a person. I ranked him as a military genius as well as a statesman."⁵¹

When interviewed about his life in retirement, Fleet Admiral Nimitz said, "I'm still learning every day. I still try to do my best and I refuse to worry about things over which I have no control. I'd still follow Grandfather Nimitz's philosophy even if it led to another court-martial."⁵²

FLEET ADMIRAL ERNEST J. KING

Fleet Admiral King earned a reputation for brilliance and toughness, that bordered on being harsh, cold, and humorless. He was intolerant of inefficiency and suspected laziness, despised dishonesty and pretension, and had no patience with people who could not make a decision. King stands in sharp contrast to Nimitz. Though they were highly successful naval leaders who achieved outstanding results, their approach was significantly different.⁵³ Their biggest difference lay in their attitudes towards people. King had little of Nimitz's understanding of, and empathy for people.

King graduated valedictorian from high school. He was popular and a natural leader. He said he developed an attitude that "he had been born to manage things."^{54 55} As a midshipman, King could accept advice, but as soon as he had confidence in his own abilities, he would reject advice quickly. Buell, in King's biography writes:

"he was an egotist, intellectually arrogant and supremely confident in his ability to distinguish truth and righteousness and to reduce the complex to the simplest terms. Subconsciously he sought to be omnipotent and infallible. There were few men whom he regarded as his equal as to his brains; he would acknowledge no mind as superior to his own. Yet he also realized that there were things he did not know and things he could not do, and in such matters he would have to depend on others. But once convinced he had the right answer, he was unyielding toward any suggestion that he might possibly be wrong. Unyielding may be too mild an adjective. Stubborn. Adamant. Tenacious. And fortified with a violent temper."⁵⁶

As a junior officer, King thought he lacked "toughness" and believed he would never get anywhere in the Navy if he did not get tougher. He thought, "good traits of sympathy, understanding, and tolerance, all part of his character, would need to be suppressed."⁵⁷ While still a junior officer, King was ambitious and thought he needed to have key assignments that were career enhancing to get anywhere in the Navy.⁵⁸ King usually challenged his senior officers when he thought he was right and they were wrong, which was frequent. What he believed was "forthrightness", they saw as "stubbornness, belligerence, and arrogant insubordination."⁵⁹

King enjoyed the concept of organizational reform. He read about it and wrote about it.⁶⁰ King began to develop intellectually by realizing that he needed to learn more about sea power than just shipboard organization if he wanted to command a fleet someday. His brother-in-law, an Army officer, encouraged his pursuit of professional knowledge by indoctrinating him beyond the concepts of Alfred Thayer Mahan and into Napoleon.⁶¹

King became an expert in gunnery and together with another junior officer, tried to overcome the problem with inaccurate optical range finders. They designed a machine that would compensate for changes in the ship's movement when predicting range. The Bureau of Ordnance adopted their design for the entire Navy. When King attempted to get their idea patented, the Bureau rejected their request. King became angry and this lead to him believing that "exceptional performance was simply doing one's job. His praise would always be rare and grudgingly given."⁶²

King's previous Commanding Officer in CINCINNATI, Captain Osterhaus, became an Admiral and asked for King to be his flag secretary. Later when Rear Admiral Osterhaus became Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, King returned to be his flag secretary.⁶³ King learned a new perspective about the Navy and this job lead to later aide jobs.

Of interest, unlike Nimitz, Burke, and Spruance who were exceptionally close and intellectual equals to their wives, King's wife took no interest in his career. She maintained a house in Annapolis, MD while King was on sea duty. She cared only about raising a family and it appears that after a few years of marriage and several years of separation, their marriage was more polite than intimate.⁶⁴

King moved on to Destroyer command. He first commanded USS TERRY and later USS CASSIN. While in command of CASSIN, he was noticed by the legendary Captain William S. Sims, Commander of the Atlantic Fleet Destroyer Flotilla. He made King his aide as well as keeping him in command of CASSIN.⁶⁵ King was also noticed by Vice Admiral Henry Mayo, Commander, Battleship Force, Atlantic Fleet who asked him to join his staff.⁶⁶ On Mayo's staff, King was working with some of the best officers of the time. Many would be flag officers during World War II.^{67 68}

"King, a disciple of Luce and Mahan (two Naval War College leaders), thought it was mandatory to study strategy and tactics." He believed "a naval officer must not let his mind stagnate. Go to the Naval War College. Read. Think. Write."⁶⁹ The Navy Department assigned King to reopen the Naval Postgraduate School in Annapolis.⁷⁰

After two years, King wanted to go to sea in a Captain's command. His detailer, Captain William D. Leahy, later the Chief of Naval Operations and a Fleet Admiral, said King was too junior and offered him command of a supply ship, USS BRIDGE. He took it, but after a year was bored and wanted command of a flotilla or division. Again Leahy said there were no billets available, and offered him submarine school in New London, CT where he could learn to

command a submarine division.⁷¹ Later he became Commander of the submarine base in New London with the objectives of enforcing discipline and efficiency.⁷²

One day while in command of the base, the submarine S-51 sank in 130 feet of water. Because submarines were still relatively new, an Admiral warned King "the Navy cannot afford to take any chance on failure as there are too many critics still around." King was assigned to be in charge of the salvage efforts. The nationwide publicity of the heroic event made King's reputation grow immensely.⁷³

After the salvage operation, King wanted to go to sea to command a cruiser. King visited his detailer in Washington and found he was still too junior. He was invited to meet Rear Admiral William Moffett, the first Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics. Naval Aviation was new to the Navy and the Navy would need senior officers to be in command, so they were trying to find senior officers that were willing to learn how to fly. Moffett promised King that if he qualified in airplanes, he would command an aircraft carrier.⁷⁴ After graduation, King took command of the seaplane tender WRIGHT. Shortly thereafter, the Chief of Naval Operations called saying the submarine S-4 sank off Cape Cod with some of the crew possibly still alive and he wanted King to supervise the rescue operation.⁷⁵

After King returned to the WRIGHT, his immediate superior, Rear Admiral Raby, was transferred without relief and King became the temporary Commander, Aircraft Squadrons, Atlantic; a Captain in an Admiral's job. Later, Admiral Moffett recommended to the Bureau of Navigation that King be assigned as Commanding Officer of the new aircraft carrier LEXINGTON. This would be King's chance to make Admiral. King took command in 1930. He ran a tight ship precisely according to Naval Regulations. He gave himself six months to learn about carrier operations. "He claimed that was all he needed to master any job."^{76 77}

King became a Rear Admiral in 1932 after attending the Naval War College. When Moffett died, King became the second Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics.⁷⁸ Despite Roosevelt's great interest in the Navy and its Admirals, King rarely met with the President. King did not believe in associating himself with politics. This hurt him for a while, because FDR was big on promoting those he knew. What helped King was that he was the only flag aviator in the Navy. He was assigned command of the seaplane force, but wanted command of the Aircraft, Battle Force.⁷⁹

When Admiral Leahy was retiring in the summer of 1939 as CNO, there was a flurry of activity to find a replacement. King refused to compete for Roosevelt's attention.⁸⁰ Admiral Leahy, Secretary of the Navy Swanson, and Rear Admiral Richardson, the Chief of the Bureau

of Navigation submitted their slate to the President and King's name was not on it.⁸¹ King learned that he would revert back to a two star Admiral and be transferred to the General Board in July 1939 and retire. He was extremely discouraged.⁸²

While on the General Board, King accompanied Secretary of the Navy Edison on a trip across country and acted as tour guide. Edison was getting ready to retire and believed that the Navy was soft and not prepared for war. King shared his concern.⁸³ The CNO, Admiral Stark, believed that King's talents were being wasted and assigned him to command the Atlantic Patrol Squadron. Though an inferior command to the one he previously had at the three star level, it was command at sea and King took command on 17 December 1940 as a two star Admiral.^{84 85}

After the United States entered the war on December 7, 1941, Knox and Roosevelt made some flag officer changes. They chose Nimitz to relieve Kimmel as CINCPAC and they recreated the position of Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet and chose King to fill the billet in Washington. King would have operational control over the entire Navy. This job and the one of CNO, who made people and resource decisions, began to conflict and King had definite dividing lines drawn and promulgated.⁸⁶ President Roosevelt, at King's urging, sent Stark to be CINC, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and King combined the jobs of CINC, U.S. Fleet and CNO.⁸⁷

King used fear and intimidation with his staff. His desk was covered with paper and he worked alone, seven days a week. While his family lived in the CNO's house, King lived aboard a ship at the Washington Navy Yard so as not to be distracted.⁸⁸ King was not pleased with the intelligence capabilities his staff possessed, so he replaced his senior intelligence officer with a line officer with no intelligence experience. He recalled CDR Smedberg from the Pacific to take the job. Smedburg stated, "Admiral King would completely disregard normal procedures when he wanted some drastic changes made."⁸⁹ While this may be a strong and courageous characteristic of a strategic leader, the method in which King lead was cold-hearted.

One of King's weak areas was his dealing with Congress.⁹⁰ King disliked politicians and had trouble dealing with civilians in control. At times he had problems with Secretary Knox, and after Knox died, he always had trouble with his successor, Secretary Forrestal. King usually was condescending and impatient. Fleet Admiral King also had trouble dealing with the media. He did not believe the media should know anything about the Navy. Upon the end of the war, King retired and was replaced as CNO by FADM Nimitz.

SOME CONCLUSIONS ON STRATEGIC LEADERS AND THEIR COMPETENCIES

While there are some principles of leadership that do not change over time, a true strategic leader in the 21st century needs to be able to adapt principles of leadership to his or her time and particular situation. FADM Nimitz was more of an adaptive leader than FADM King. King was set in his ways and was not going to change. An argument can be made that he was correct in his beliefs that the Navy was weak and needed to become tougher and more combat-ready, but his methods of dealing with people could have been different while still achieving the same results. Some say management is about to-do lists while leadership is about inspiring humans to excel. King was more a manager than a leader while Nimitz possessed the best qualities of both.

Leadership can be learned. While it takes an inherent personality to be a successful leader, an adaptive person can modify his or her behavior over time to become a successful strategic leader. However, the person must want to. There are many officers that believe their leadership style is successful and has produced great results thus far in their careers. Their superiors see the results, but sometimes not how the results were achieved. When a superior has looked beyond the results into how things are achieved, these types of officers usually are relieved of their commands. While the Navy relieves two or three officers per year for these reasons, unfortunately there are many more that go unnoticed. These results are manifested in the retention of enlisted Sailors and in particular, the junior officer retention problems the Navy and other Services are facing. These types of leaders promote up to a certain level based on the performance of their commands and on the backs of their Sailors. Many attempt to make the leap to the strategic level, but only few succeed. Those with poor leadership attributes that do promote to Admiral, typically retire at the one star Admiral level, perhaps the two star rank at most. While the Navy has made great strides in changing its approach to teaching leadership at all levels, and while it appears each generation of officers that move through the ranks say they are going to make it better when they get “there”, it appears that with each generation the Navy still has FADM King “screamers” that slip through.

One of the functions of making the leap to the strategic leader position is clearly timing and what is going on in the world. Many Captains had regular commands where their tour was quiet and did not promote to Admiral. Others, perhaps even some less worthy, had commands that participated in real world crisis events and by timing, became noticed, and were promoted to Admiral. It is clear that if the path to war and eventually World War II had not occurred, Fleet Admiral King would have retired from the General Board as a two star Admiral never having

achieved the strategic leadership position he so adamantly desired. Though his professional qualifications were well known and respected, his leadership style and his ability to get along with his superiors and contemporaries were his major downfall. Even without World War II, it is believed that Fleet Admiral Nimitz would have proceeded on in rank and achieved the job of Chief of Naval Operations. He also possessed the professional qualifications, but more importantly he possessed the personal leadership qualifications that would have and did make him a successful strategic leader. President Harry Truman once said leadership is about making someone do something that they do not want to do and like it.

Strategic leadership is about inspiring people to excel. This includes inspiring those superior to the leader to the point that they recognize that an individual has what it takes and ensures they get the correct jobs to gain the necessary experience and practice at leadership to even more refine their skills. Those that realize this and can learn to inspire people will successfully make it to the strategic leadership positions and achieve great things.

Word Count = 5,998

ENDNOTES

¹ Ken Jones, Destroyer Squadron 23 (Philadelphia, PA: Chilton Company, 1959), vii.

² Bill Gertz, "China Prepares for War With U.S. Over Taiwan," 15 November 2000; available from <http://ebird.dtic.mil/Nov2000/e20001115china.htm>; Internet; accessed 15 November 2000. In addition, General Hugh Shelton, the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff expressed his concerns as reflected in a Washington Times newspaper article. Bill Gertz, "Gen. Shelton Sees China As Growing Threat to U.S.," 15 December 2000; available from <http://ebird.dtic.mil>; Internet; accessed 15 December 2000. Iran has acquired from Russia three Kilo class submarines capable of firing torpedoes and laying mines, along with Chinese C802 anti-ship cruise missiles and C802 capable guided missile patrol craft. Iran is acquiring increasingly sophisticated mines from Russia and appears interested in purchasing the Chinese EM52 rocket propelled encased torpedo mines. These mines are designed to remain on the bottom of the ocean until activated by a passing ship. Andrew Krepinevich, "A Navy for A New Era," 1 May 1996, available from <http://www.csbaonline.org>; Internet, accessed 26 September 2000. In 1998, after being assisted by Russian companies with missile technology, Iran successfully tested a Shihab III missile with a range of approximately 900 miles. Robert O. Freedman, "Russia-Iranian Relations in the 1990's," Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA) Journal, Volume 4, Number 2(June 2000), available from http://radiobergen.org/russia/russia_iran_relations.html; Internet; accessed 26 September 2000.

³ Roderick R. Magee II, Strategic Leadership Primer (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Department of Leadership and Management, U.S. Army War College, 1998), 1.

⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁵ For the military, the environment can be joint (multi-Service), multi-national (coalition forces), or internal to one's Service. It can involve aspects of political, military, diplomatic, and economical disciplines. Each Service has their own culture and traditions, which affect leadership differently. Strategic leadership for a military officer also includes not just the military, but dealing with the rest of the Executive Branch, Congress, and other federal agencies.

⁶ William Turque and Mark Hosenball, "The Veep: Beneath Cheney's Placid Surface," Newsweek, 7 August 2000, 28-30.

⁷ President Bush was talking about Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld when he was heading the bipartisan panel in 1998 to study nations that could threaten the US with long-range missiles.

⁸ Eric Schmitt, "Rumsfeld is Named," New York Times, 29 December 2000, sec. A, p.A1.

⁹ Bob Woodward, "Bush's Wild Card," Washington Post, 12 January 2001, sec A, p. 25. These six core traits were written in a letter to Mr. Woodward from Secretary Rumsfeld dated 29 September 1988.

¹⁰ Robert X. Cringely, "The Best CEO's, The Top 50," Worth, May 1999, 102. Worth Magazine found a CEO has to be absolutely honest. There can be no questions about his integrity. They chose Michael Dell of Dell Computer as their number one CEO because he is

still trying to make the business run even better and because he “leads change in the industry that is changing everything.” The author described Gordon Bethune, the CEO of Continental Airlines who turned the corporation from the worst to one of the best airlines in the industry. His business philosophy is to “work hard, and fly right.” His strengths are that he is just a regular guy who is able to motivate the troops and instill his vision. He knows how to find the best people, and then he trusts and rewards them for good performance.

¹¹ Gordon Bethune and Scott Huler, From Worst to First: Behind the Scenes of Continental's Remarkable Comeback (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1998). Bethune took a company that was a terrible place to work from the bottom to the top of the airline industry. The airlines earned 12 straight quarters of profit after 10 straight years of losses and two bankruptcy filings. They earned the J.D. Power and Associates award for customer satisfaction two years in a row. No other airline up to that time had achieved this. Continental “provided lousy service, paid its employees badly, had high employee turnover, and those employees that stayed were so de-motivated that they got injured on the job and had to receive workers’ compensation.” Bethune described his first step was to prove to the employees that the leadership was able to trust them and willing to let them do their job. “He got the ‘managers’ out of their way.” He started explaining what he wanted done and started rewarding them for doing it. Bethune stressed all employees must work as a team. The organization was “an entire culture, an entire way of being in business together.” This is a concept the Navy used to use stating the Navy was not just a job, but a way of life. Bethune emphasizes in his book “what you measure and reward is what you get.” He also “raised the bar on standards” and stressed that “the people are the company and service to customers is the business.” Bethune stressed that “success has no auto pilot, keep raising the bar... the future is not the past... complacency kills... and don’t take anything for granted.” Continental Airlines strategy included: “nobody loses when the whole team wins, get ‘buy-in’ from the team, if the coach wins... the team wins, keep the lines of communication open, receive all the news (even the bad) all the time, communication works both ways... top down so get the right people communicating,” and making the environment a predictable place to work. Bethune believes that it is important to clarify the goals and metrics and define success up front because “what gets measured gets managed... so define success right.”

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Wess Roberts, Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun (New York, NY: Warner Books, 1985). Attila’s leadership principles include the leader should be “tempered by patience and unrelenting tenacity” and possess “political insight mastered by one who listens and watches while he waits for the precise moment to act.” His leadership qualities include: loyalty to the leader and down to the people, courage, desire, an inherent commitment to influencing people, emotional stamina... to recover from disappointment, physical stamina, empathy, an appreciation for and an understanding of the values of others, decisiveness, anticipation... learning from observations and through instincts sharpened by tested experience, timing, competitiveness, self-confidence, accountability, responsibility, credibility... through words and actions, dependability, and stewardship. Stewardship is a “a caretaker quality” and is most important of all. It is not just stewardship of the organization, or in the Navy’s example, a ship, but stewardship of the crew. Roberts states that “a leader must serve in a manner that encourages confidence, trust and loyalty. Subordinates are not to be abused; they are to be guided, developed and rewarded for their performance. Punishment is a consequence of last resort and should be used sparingly. Leaders are caretakers of the interests and well being of those and the purposes they serve.” Robert’s uses the analogy of Attila the Hun’s leadership to

embody his thesis. He goes on to say that leaders have to want to be in charge. They have to have a passion to succeed. One of the most important characteristics is that they have to be willing to learn, listen, and to grow in their awareness and abilities. They must not feel threatened by capable contemporaries or subordinates and should never exercise their authority to the disadvantage of their subordinates. In a strategic environment, whether in peacetime or while at war, paying “deference to your adversaries is essential. Once you fail to recognize their abilities, influence and potential, they may gain advantage over you.” All of these characteristics apply in today’s leadership environment.

¹⁴ Stephen Covey’s seven habits of highly effective people are: be proactive, begin with the end in mind, put first things first through willpower, think win/win, seek first to understand, synergize creativity, and sharpen the saw with continuous improvement. Stephen R. Covey, Principle-Centered Leadership (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 40-47.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid. Covey also believes a key to success is building the culture of the organization around a common vision with some bedrock principles. A successful strategic leader is “constantly striving to align strategy, style, structure, and systems with mission and the environment.” The goal of any strategic leader is to achieve alignment at the organizational level. The new Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Vernon Clark has stated alignment was one of his top five priorities when he took office. “Principle-Centered Leadership” lists seven chronic problems with leaders and organizations that are not successful. They are: no shared vision or values; no deep understanding of and commitment to a vision at all levels of the organization; no strategic path; poor alignment between structure and values, vision, where structure and systems poorly serve the strategic path to mission accomplishment; the style is wrong and it does not match vision or values or mission; poor leadership and people skills where the leader’s style does not match his or her skills and the corollary that skills do not match the style needed; and low trust in the organization because of a lack of integrity where the leader’s values do not equal actions.

¹⁷ Fred Kacher, “Before They Were Stars,” Proceedings 126/10 (October 2000): 93. The October, 2000 issue of the Naval Institute’s “Proceedings” has an essay that discusses the leadership of Admirals when they were in command at the rank of Commander (O5). Using Stephen Covey’s outline, Lieutenant Commander Fred Kacher comes up with the “Seven Habits of Highly Effective Commanding Officers.” He states that his survey found that successful Naval officers in command equipped their people with the best, took the time to master and then teach the art of warfighting, viewed every crew member as a person of value, did not lead through fear but led by example, made their Sailors aware that they were part of a special fraternity, were willing to take risks and trust their people, and were willing to visualize the impossible.

¹⁸ Donald T. Phillips, The Founding Fathers on Leadership (New York, NY: Time Warner, 1997). Phillips believed that the founding fathers had a pretty good idea of where they wanted to go before they acted or attempted to inspire others. They “sensed their opportunity and seized their moment.” Phillips’ leadership competencies derived from America’s founding fathers are: build an effective team to help achieve your vision and goals; select individuals who are leaders in their own right; be decisive; when making a decision, gather information and understand all of the facts, consider various solutions and their consequences, and make sure the decision is consistent with your objectives; effectively communicate your decision; inspire

the masses; encourage others to take the lead; only through plain talk can the great masses of people be mobilized toward a single line of thinking; rally every member of the organization to a common cause; listen, then speak, follow, then lead; obtain information and make timely decisions; understand what people think and feel; keep people informed; obtain feedback; inspire and innovate; turn a negative into a positive when the competition thinks you are down for the count, there is an opportunity to achieve major victory; march while the competition is sleeping, ride close to the competition to keep a close eye on them; there is always an advantage to the proactive party; share the hardships of those you lead; when outnumbered, put nothing at risk unless compelled by necessity; when confronted by overwhelming power, wear them down, wait them out, and frustrate the heck out of their leadership; employ tactics that make your organization seem larger than it is; when your advisers are divided, break the logjam with a decision and move forward; frequently, the most effective way to defend is to attack; when the competition is exhausted and weak, strike; leverage the assets at your disposal; make do with what you have, stretch everything to the limit and scrounge for more; when you employ innovative and unconventional tactics, you inspire like-minded people to do the same; don't simply allow creativity and innovation; encourage it; be smart enough to realize that you can't do it all; build strong alliances for they will strengthen forces and shore up a major weakness, lift morale and build courage, add new markets, dilute the competition; the larger your organization, the more you must delegate; surround yourself with experts in financial matters, listen to them, and then act on their advice; refuse to lose and learn continuously; continue to move forward; fight back; be patient; learn from experiences and mistakes; lessons learned are just lessons that end up being relearned; allow for mistakes, the experience of error will enable you to act better in the future; remember that all leaders must be readers; ability to learn + action = effective leadership; remember that as a leader, you must be willing and prepared to accept the negative human behavior that accompanies the change process; encourage others to take risk, when they fail, urge them to try again; as a leader, you are an agent of change; be a prudent risk taker; the better any man is, the lower thoughts he has of himself; winners attract winners; construct your culture with simplicity, flexibility, and elasticity so that it will be able to suffer hard knocks with little damage; always remain optimistic, see a rising sun rather than a setting sun; search for common ground and create a win/win situation; and remember that compromise is the tool of a true leader. Ibid.

¹⁹ Donald T. Phillips, Lincoln on Leadership: Executive Strategies for Tough Times (New York, NY: Time Warner, 1992). Lincoln possessed the traits of honesty and integrity, empathy for the common man, and devotion to the rights of individuals. He believed that a leader had to earn the respect and confidence of his men. Lincoln once said concerning one of his Generals, "he is losing the confidence of the men near him, whose support any man in his position must have to be successful. His cardinal mistake was that he isolates himself, and allows nobody to see him; and by which he does not know what is going on in the very matter he is dealing with." Vice Admiral Ghormley made the same mistake in the South Pacific in the first year of the United States' involvement in World War II and was relieved of command. Lincoln would go to the front lines to discover firsthand what was happening. He often told people to "get out of the office and circulate among the troops." This philosophy was labeled management by walking around (MWBA) by Tom Peters and Robert Waterman in their 1982 book "In Search of Excellence." Lincoln believed in building strong alliances both personally and professionally. "If they knew what he would do, they could make their own decisions without asking him for direction, thereby avoiding delay and inactivity." Real communication goes in both directions and Lincoln believed in the power of effective listening. He treated people the way he would want to be treated and believed the power of persuasion was more important than coercion. Lincoln knew "the value of making requests as opposed to issuing orders," and believed

empowering subordinates to act is what won the war. Relating a well-chosen story or anecdote was his chief form of persuasion. Fleet Admiral Nimitz used this same ability during his career and during World War II. "Lincoln found that to merely imply something or make a suggestion was much more effective than commanding others to obey him." However, it was important that he chose the correct leaders under him. Lincoln went through many Generals before he found his Grant. Phillips states, "choose as your chief subordinates those people who crave responsibility and take risks. Do not forget that aggressive leaders tend to choose employees in their own image as well." The following is a summary of Lincoln's remarkable competencies as they might apply in today's world. He believed in encouraging innovation, the ability to understand the reality of the situation and then confront it decisively, having the courage to handle unjust criticism, maintaining grace under pressure, knowing right from wrong, being decisive, "thinking anew, acting anew," not losing confidence in your people when they fail, never succeeding if you never try, encouraging subordinates to take action on their own initiative without waiting for orders, being quick and decisive at employing new advances, mastering the art of public speaking, and preaching a vision and continually reaffirming it. Lincoln believed that "when the occasion is piled high with difficulty," one needed to "rise with it." Finally, Lincoln, as Vice President Dick Cheney of today, was a selfless, self-effacing man. He believed in leading by being led. He had great confidence in his ability to perform and "was not insecure and did not feel threatened by others." "Flexible, he was open-minded, and willing to let his subordinates take all the glory for victories." He gave people the impression that they were leading him. He always exerted some control and stayed informed of their activity. In his changing environment, if Lincoln were a micromanager, he would have failed.

²⁰ James M. Strock, Reagan on Leadership: Executive Lessons From the Great Communicator (Rocklin, CA: Forum Prima Publishing, 1998). President Reagan believed crafting a compelling vision was the most important aspect of leadership. "Vision is the indispensable key to leadership of any enterprise. Keep your vision at the level of principle and strategy, able to encompass flexibility, creativity, and exercise continuous improvement as it is implemented." "Make your vision as inclusive as possible – bringing out the best in your own organization and tempting others, even competitors, toward your vision." A leader's top priorities should flow clearly from the vision. It is important to have a small number of top priorities. Too many priorities mean nothing is a priority. President Reagan believed that once everyone understood his vision, they could operate and make decisions from a common baseline. He believed it was important for a leader to be a skilled communicator in order to personify their vision. President Reagan increased the size and capability of the United States' military because he believed it was important to negotiate from strength. He believed it was important for the strategic leader to become the chief negotiator of an organization. In negotiations, Strock emphasizes that it is important to not attach your ego to a particular position or outcome. A leader should never discuss his or her negotiation tactics and should always do their homework in advance. President Reagan always knew when to apply an indirect approach. Strock states that "when a direct approach has a small chance of success, consider an indirect approach which can be more effective." Some other leadership principles brought out by President Reagan's administration are to plan in advance for mistakes and failures, for they will occur. A successful strategic leader needs to learn from failure and mistakes, assume accountability, take remedial action, regain confidence, and move on. A good strategic leader needs to know that every organization will make mistakes and face failure. "To the maximum extent possible, such events should be viewed as important opportunities to learn." In his early years, President Reagan was an actor and had an impeccable sense of timing. Timing, he believed was of critical importance. Strock states, "an action taken too soon or too late may have different consequences than a decision implemented at the right time."

President Reagan did not mind who received credit within his administration for a good idea or a job well done. For a strategic leader, it is important to remember, “there is no limit to what a man can do or where he can go if he doesn’t mind who gets the credit.” President Reagan practiced the art of delegation and empowerment of subordinates. Strock states, “do only what your subordinates cannot do.” However, as with President Lincoln on leadership, “to the extent that your management style relies on empowerment of staff and decentralization of authority, a strategic leader must put correspondingly greater personal emphasis on initial personnel selection.” President Reagan also believed in confronting criticism directly and using humor to respond to criticism. “Never take criticism personally for it will not allow you to remain above the fray. A leader must emphasize the affirmative and accept and learn from criticism.” President Reagan’s personal leadership traits included: courage, authenticity, effectively communication, confidence and optimism, empathy, grace and charm, discipline, perseverance and constancy, humility, and believing in keeping some distance from subordinates to highlight the dignity of office.

²¹ James Kouzes is the Chairman and CEO of TPG/Learning Systems. Barry Posner is a professor of organizational behavior and a managing partner of the Executive Development Center at Santa Clara University.

²² James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, The Leadership Challenge: How to Keep Getting Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1995). Kouzes and Posner define leadership as the “the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations.” They believe the extraordinary strategic leaders experiment and take risks, encourage “possibility thinking”, honor their risk takers, debrief every failure as well as every success, envision the future and imagine ideal scenarios, dare to make a difference, develop a shared sense of destiny, build trusting relationships, share information and resources, develop their interpersonal competence, speak positively and from the heart, and probably most important, listen first and often. They found that superior organizations strengthen people by giving power away, providing choice, developing competence, assigning critical tasks, and offering visible support. Superior strategic leaders “increase the return on their square footage” by enlarging “people’s sphere of influence.” They value education of their employees and make sure delegated tasks are relevant. Their research has shown that if people know what is going on, and how they fit into the overall picture, they feel important and are motivated by their jobs. The better strategic leaders seem to have what they call regular “great huddles” and “chalk talks” to keep people informed about their organization’s performance. They also never fail to “make heroes of other people” and reward their employees. Kouzes and Posner have researched the importance of credibility. Their research asked: how do you know if someone is credible, how would you define credibility in behavioral terms, and how would you recognize credible leaders? They found that leaders practice what they preach, walk the talk (actions are consistent with their words and speak louder than words), with the most frequent response being that leaders do what they say they will do. The earlier example of CEO Gordon Bethune and Continental Airlines is a perfect example of this. They also found some other common threads across above average leaders. They: seize opportunities to teach, set the example, build commitment to action, create a climate that suggests success is imminent, are creative about rewards and recognition and give them personally in public, provide feedback, schedule celebrations to celebrate victories, and are cheerleaders. Kouzes and Posner also talk about the fact that a strategic leader can learn to lead, and does not have to be a born leader. The superior leaders want to learn and want to continuously be better. Their research also asked how does one learn to lead? They found that superior leaders learned by: trial and error, observation of others, job assignments and experiences, relationships with people whom they

have come in contact with, hardships they had endured, and formal training and education. The strategic naval leaders of World War II possessed these methods of learning throughout their careers. Their definition of "encouraging the heart" is another way of advocating mentorship of the young and offering encouragement that will draw talented people up the ladder to the top. Their research was different in that they also sought to find out what people expect of their leaders; what they call "the other half of the equation."

²³ Deming's 14 points are: (1) create a constancy of purpose toward improvement, (2) adopt the new philosophy, (3) cease dependence on inspection to achieve quality, (4) Move toward a single supplier, (5) improve constantly and forever the system of production and service to improve quality and productivity, (6) institute job training, (7) teach and institute leadership, (8) drive out fear to increase everyone's effectiveness. Create trust, and a climate for innovation, (9) Break down barriers between departments, (10) eliminate slogans, exhortations, and production targets, (11) eliminate numerical goals and quotas for production, (12) remove barriers that rob hourly workers of their right to pride of workmanship. Eliminate the annual rating or merit system, (13) institute a program of vigorous education and self-improvement, and (14) institute an action plan and put everybody in the company to work to accomplish the transformation. When American corporations were not interested, Mr. Deming traveled to Japan and began to teach there. When Japan's corporations were eclipsing the United States in productivity and profitability, the United States began to study why and began to take Mr. Deming seriously. Stephen R. Covey, Principle-Centered Leadership (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 276-277.

²⁴ Over the past 20 years, the Navy has evolved in its thoughts about leadership from believing leadership cannot be taught to believing it can. In the early 1980's, the Navy's training program was called Leadership, Management, Education and Training (LMET). In the early 1990s, The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Frank Kelso, ordered that Total Quality Leadership (TQL) offices be set up on both coasts and all officers and enlisted take courses in and practice TQL. During the military draw down, these offices have faded away and people do not talk about TQL now. In the mid 1990s, the Navy opened a formal Leadership school in Newport, Rhode Island and has developed a Navy-wide course teaching leadership at the Division Officer, Department Head, Executive Officer, and Commanding Officer levels. In addition, Navy Captains upon their selection to Admiral participate in the Capstone program for flag officers.

²⁵ Dede W. Casad and Frank A. Driscoll, Chester W. Nimitz, Admiral of the Hills (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1983), vii.

²⁶ Ibid., 5.

²⁷ Ibid., 44-45. Grandfather Nimitz taught him "you will need to learn the difference between things that will never change and things time will take care of. Time will work on your side if you have the patience to let it take over." He also taught him he always "believed that people make their own breaks, maybe it's through the mistakes of others and maybe it is from good planning. When you go to sea, you will need to know how to plan carefully. When you want something you can't start planning too soon. Be sure you know what you want is right for you and then go after it."

²⁸ E. B. Potter, Nimitz (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1976), 55. Nimitz, as a first class midshipman was a company commander with three stripes. On one occasion, he and his fellow midshipmen drew straws to see who would go out and get beer for their beer parties they secretly had in an area of new construction at the academy. Nimitz lost and had to go to the tailor shop on Maryland Avenue in Annapolis with a suitcase where the proprietor loaded up the suitcase with beer in the back room. Another person was there and saw him do this. On Monday, when Nimitz went to Navigation class, he was stunned to see the new instructor was the same person at the Tailor shop. Nimitz assumed this incident would end his naval career. The Lieutenant Commander never said anything. Nimitz said the experience "taught me to be lenient and look with tolerance on first offenders when in later years they came before me as a Commanding Officer holding Mast." After commissioning and serving on the battleship OHIO and cruiser BALTIMORE, he was given command of the gunboat PANAY.

²⁹ Ibid., 59. Among FADM Nimitz's contemporaries destined for high command, Admiral Spruance had his first destroyer command at age 26, Fleet Admiral Halsey at age 30, and Fleet Admiral King at age 36.

³⁰ Ibid., 61-62. While in New London, Nimitz was promoted from Ensign directly to Lieutenant. While at sea, an enlisted man fell overboard from the submarine SKIPJACK, and Nimitz jumped in to save him. They were swept away and later picked up by the Battleship NORTH DAKOTA. Nimitz was awarded a life saving medal. He impressed both sailors and officers with the fact that he believed in taking care of his men. He became the Navy's expert in diesel engines. After getting married to Catherine Freeman, a girl from the Boston area, the Navy sent him to Germany to study more about diesel engines at the Blohm and Voss Shipbuilding Company in Hamburg. From there, he returned to the machinery division of the Brooklyn Navy Yard in New York. Nimitz was accident-prone. He was on a platform around a ship that was being worked on when it collapsed. He was not injured, just sore for days and had back trouble years later from the incident. One day, he was demonstrating to a group how the new diesel engines worked. He was wearing a new kind of cotton gloves to protect his hands that were larger than his actual hand size. He didn't realize how close his hand was to the turning gears as he pointed, the glove became caught in the gears. He lost most of his ring finger on his left hand. His Naval Academy ring saved him from losing his entire hand and most likely his career.

³¹ Ibid., 133. While Nimitz skillfully used his persuasive abilities, his Chief Petty Officers did the rest, making contacts with the local chiefs and warrant officers. They brought in the supplies at night by truck and built the base from stolen equipment that the local commanding officers never missed.

³² Today, Commander, Submarine Force Atlantic, is a three star Admiral's position.

³³ Ibid., 138.

³⁴ Ibid., 144. FADM Nimitz's good humor and the fact that he was well read allowed him to get along with particularly difficult professors that eventually accepted him as their equal. In this job, he again practiced the art of persuasion that later prepared him for senior command.

³⁵ This organization became what is known today as the Bureau of Naval Personnel (BUPERS). The Bureau of Navigation, as BUPERS today, is responsible for all officer and

enlisted assignments throughout the Navy and is considered a very career-enhancing job. This assignment would set the stage for Nimitz to return as the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation.

³⁶ Casad and Driscoll, 100. While working in the Bureau, a story developed that illustrates Nimitz's abilities to be liked and get along with people. He used to walk to work and pick cherries off of cherry trees along a fence along the way. One day "a lady caught him and a friend enjoying her cherries. Chester listened patiently as she scolded them and when she had finished, he complimented her on the quality of the fruit, the beauty of her yard, and the attractiveness of her home. Her belligerence wilted under his charm and she invited them to return to her home for more cherries."

³⁷ Potter, 10. Ironically, Nimitz's success in part is from his ability to anticipate events. In a conversation with his son many years earlier, his son asked him how far he wanted to go in the Navy. Nimitz answered that he wanted to be the Chief of Naval Operations. He also predicted that another war would come and that he wanted to be on shore duty somewhere because he felt the United States would be caught by surprise and that all of the commanders at sea would be relieved of duty and that those on shore duty would get the choice at-sea commands. His prediction came true.

³⁸ Casad and Driscoll, 115. Nimitz believed patience was important. From the time he was a member of the rowing team at Annapolis, he learned a sense of timing and established himself as a team man. This sense of balance was perfect in his new job because he found himself in between wanting to be aggressive against the Japanese and needing to buy time after Pearl Harbor. Nimitz knew how to unite skills and abilities. His contagious sense of humor prevailed over many difficult situations. He worked hard to stay informed and to keep his mind agile. Nimitz had unquestionable energy. He slept little. He would go to bed around 10pm, sleep until 3am, get up and read or study, sleep at 5am for about an hour, and then go to work. He liked a saying that Theodore Roosevelt said once, "if you need a hand, try the one on the end of your arm." Nimitz did not like the prima donna on stage, in business or on the battlefield. He felt his job was to orchestrate and to produce harmonious results. His approach was very conservative, keeping a low profile as compared to General MacArthur. There were a few occasions during the Pacific War when Nimitz needed to defend his strategies with the Joint Chiefs against MacArthur. Nimitz traded on his humility and sense of humor and used it as a function for him in high-level meetings. He was one of the most liked men in the Navy, and usually achieved what he wanted.

³⁹ Ibid., 128-129. When Nimitz took over Pearl Harbor, he expressed his faith in each man for his ability. This expression of confidence restored self-respect in the staff. He persuaded them he could not do the job without their help. He demonstrated empathy for Admiral Kimmel because as most Commanding Officers know, it is usually by the grace of God that it did not happen to them. Initially, Admiral Nimitz made changes only where absolutely necessary, thereby establishing his staff's worth and credibility and they would never forget his kindness. He created a loyalty that lasted his lifetime. The significant job of taking over as Commander in Chief, Pacific after the destruction of the fleet at Pearl Harbor was beyond comprehension. He chose to travel to Pearl Harbor by train across country and then by plane from California. While traveling, he used this time to think. He thought about his ideas on leadership and how he would handle the situation and knew he needed to establish his own style. His thoughts included "picking good men and helping them to do their best, creating loyalty up and down the chain of command, and the fact that discipline and devotion to duty by subordinates must be

matched by patience, tolerance, and understanding by superiors. Unassumingly, he won the respect of his men by his personal drive, which brought forth the best in himself and others."

⁴⁰ Ibid., 156-158.

⁴¹ Potter, 34. All options brought to his attention became alternatives for his decision. When forming war plans, he would invite all senior officers in Pearl Harbor to attend his meetings. He vetted their opinions before making a decision. Admiral Raymond Spruance remarked, "this was like a breath of fresh air."

⁴² Many of the World War II naval leaders of flag rank graduated from the Naval Academy. King, the June before Nimitz arrived. Halsey the year before Nimitz graduated. Many Admirals of World War II including Spruance, Stark, Kimmel, Ingersoll, Ghormley, Fletcher, Towers, McCain, Fitch, Kinkaid, Turner and more were all there at the same time (between 1901 and 1905). Everyone knew one another and therefore the officers who commanded the naval forces were not strangers to one another. At that time, all Admirals graduated from the Naval Academy. Today, a little less than 50 percent do.

⁴³ Casad and Driscoll, 183. King was always critical. He would remove men from the battlefield for the slightest mistake and bring them to Washington to get a personal inquisition. Nimitz, with his "quiet power" would stick up for his people by telling FADM King "that if something was wrong, you had better start looking at me." This would usually divert King's attention to something else.

⁴⁴ Potter, 77-99. After the Battle of the Coral Sea, Nimitz recommended, based on the results, that Rear Admiral Jack Fletcher be promoted to Vice Admiral and that he receive a medal. FADM King refused. He believed Fletcher could have done better by using his destroyers at night. This was just another example of King not believing in rewarding his people for doing what he considered to be their job. During the Battle of Midway, when there was confusion as to why Spruance appeared to be retreating from the Japanese damaged force, the staff was getting anxious for information. Nimitz refused to intervene. He stated "I'm sure Spruance has a better sense of what's going on out there than we have here, I'm sure he has a very good reason for this. We'll learn all about it in the course of time. From here, we are not in a position to kibitz a commander in the field of action."

⁴⁵ Ibid., 176. Nimitz's simple manner tended to conceal his intelligence. Admiral Spruance said of him "the better I get to know him, the more I admire his intelligence, his open-mindedness, and his approachability for any who had new or different ideas, and, above all, his utter fearlessness and his courage in pushing the war."

⁴⁶ Ibid., 197. To Mrs. Nimitz, he wrote: "Today I have replaced Ghormley with Halsey. It was a sore mental struggle and the decision was not reached until after hours of anguished consideration. The reason I relieved him was because he was too immersed in detail and not sufficiently bold and aggressive at the right times."

⁴⁷ Ibid., 198. Halsey's reputation for aggressiveness was known throughout the fleet. Word of his taking command spread throughout the forces. One officer on Guadalcanal remembered the effect: "I'll never forget it: One minute we were too limp with malaria to crawl out of our foxholes; the next, we were running around whooping like kids."

⁴⁸ Ibid., 199.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 228. If they could not handle the authority and were senior, he would quietly remove them and reassign them. If they were junior and he felt they needed a "shock", he would say, "Young man, you fail to cut the mustard, and I hereby dispense with your services." Though he possessed patience, he would not allow himself or his fellow officers to be taken advantage of by a poor performer. He had a keen sense of dealing with people.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 228. However, the author notes that Spruance's close association with Nimitz as his Chief of Staff and close personal friend apparently allowed Nimitz's personal qualities to rub off on Spruance for he was "later less stiff and formal." Nimitz could be formal as well when he thought it was necessary. For instance, he was obsessive about he and everyone else being on time. Though Nimitz and Spruance thought alike, their personalities were different. Some referred to Spruance as "prim" and "old frozen face." Nimitz was rather "easygoing, amiable while Spruance was a near, rigid, down-to-earth type of person who was always all business." Spruance did not have the ability to communicate as effectively with people as Nimitz did.

⁵¹ Ibid., 409.

⁵² Casad and Driscoll, 281.

⁵³ Potter, p. 32. Both FADM King and FADM Nimitz were loyal and dedicated to the Navy. "Both had integrity and intelligence, and both were born strategists and organizers with a genius for clarifying and simplifying and a jaundiced eye for useless complications and wasted motion."

⁵⁴ Thomas B. Buell, Master of Sea Power: A Biography of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), 4.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 7. Reminiscing years later on his childhood, King stated, "If I didn't agree, I said so." This philosophy followed him throughout his life, which tended to get him in trouble with his superior officers.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 11, 17. As a junior officer, King thought of himself as a master navigator and enforced exacting standards on his crews. Years later as Commanding Officer of the aircraft carrier LEXINGTON, he would fire his navigators. Many years later as Commander in Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, he would force his Captains to use more dangerous routes instead of the main transit lanes to test them. His critics said he hazarded his ships.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 19, 24. He attempted to orchestrate his own transfer from his first ship, the battleship ILLINOIS to the Flotilla Commander's staff. However, his Commanding Officer convinced him to stay and gain experience and said he would help him find a good job at the end of his tour. As an Ensign, he used to drink heavily, liked parties, gambling, dancing and chasing women. He would routinely get in trouble for being late the next morning. After it was documented in his evaluations, he continued the behavior but stopped being late and did not like anyone who was late the next morning.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 25. As a junior officer, King had what he considered misunderstandings with his executive officer and even a flag officer; all documented in his fitness reports. He would be punished by being confined to his stateroom on his ship. This was called being put “under hatches”, which today is called being placed “in hack.”

⁶⁰ Ibid., 29. As a junior officer he wrote that the Navy needed better organization. He believed junior officers should prepare themselves for command by “learning to exercise authority and responsibility.” FADM King “advocated the principle of telling a subordinate what had to be done but not telling him how to do it; the subordinate should use initiative without interference from the superior.” Though this concept is good advice to follow, even today, King did not always practice what he preached when he became a senior officer.

⁶¹ Ibid., 35. FADM King believed that to be published was career enhancing. He won the 1909 U.S. Naval Institute prize essay award on shipboard organization. This allowed him to be recognized throughout the Navy and he believed this helped his career. Being published may not always be career enhancing. Placing your beliefs in writing for all to read can be a two-edged sword depending on your beliefs, your timing and the sensitivity of the topic.

⁶² Ibid., 36.

⁶³ Ibid., 40.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 42. When FADM King would rotate to shore duty, he would return to Annapolis. He was generous with money for his family and appeared to be a family man when home. He and his wife, Mattie, had four daughters by this point in his career.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 44-45. Sims was probably the most influential naval officer of the time and encouraged open discussions about anything with his subordinates. Once all viewpoints were considered in the open forum of the group, Sims would make a decision and move on. One time, King thought the decision was wrong and challenged Sims in the public forum. Sims became angry and the next day King recommended he find another aide. Sims actually did not want to, but did. Later Sims elevated King to command a four-ship division while still in command of CASSIN. With CASSIN being King’s second destroyer command, he now considered himself an expert. He always stayed on the bridge of the ship day and night and rarely went below. He could not take his senior officers getting angry with him, but he frequently would get angry with his subordinate officers. This was totally opposite to Nimitz and Spruance who both trusted their subordinates to do their job. In fact Spruance would often not be on the Bridge when he was suppose to, leaving complex operations to his junior officers while he slept in his cabin.

⁶⁶ King asked the advice of some senior officers he admired and they recommended he take the job because Mayo was to become Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 49. King did not like flag officers that were “show-offs.” Mayo was modest and restrained. King said Mayo trusted his staff and believed “they were competent until proven otherwise. It was his habit to talk things over and discuss them, but it was the staff that did the work.” King often said it was Mayo who he learned the most from and tried to be like when he became a flag officer. The author states, “these were puzzling statements, because when King became a flag officer, his way of doing things did not resemble Mayo’s style of command.”

⁶⁸ Ibid., 50, 52-53. While on Mayo's staff, King was exposed to many Navy flag officers. He despised many of them. He believed many were self-serving and he often showed his contempt for them. They resented him for arguing with them when "they wanted the last word." King served on Mayo's staff during World War I. Mayo's prestige attracted the Europeans and King traveled much during the war to many high level conferences learning a lot about the Navy Department, Washington politicians, and Allied civilians and military that would prepare him for his role during World War II. This was a unique experience for an officer of his relatively junior rank (junior Captain).

⁶⁹ Ibid., 52.

⁷⁰ The Naval Postgraduate School was a department established in 1909 at the Naval Academy that was closed during World War I. King reopened it after the war.

⁷¹ In submarines, most crews lived aboard tenders (large ships that provided sleeping quarters, repair facilities and supplies to submarines and their crews). They rarely went to sea and operated together. King said, "as usual, I had ideas of my own." He made the crews live aboard their submarines, go to sea in them, and worked out tactics for them to operate together. He treated the submarines like ships. Though the submarine crews despised him, he prepared them for war.

⁷² Ibid., 62-64.

⁷³ Ibid., 71. It was an extremely difficult job given the poor weather conditions, the time of the year, and risk to diver's lives. After several attempts, King finally raised S-51 and returned her to the Brooklyn Naval Yard. Though the risk was great, this chance event had made him rise above all other Captains and his path to flag rank seem to accelerate. A few months before the salvage operations, Admiral Charles F. Hughes, the Chief of Naval Operations, had told King that his service reputation was in trouble because he had had "too many glamour jobs and had rarely put his career on the line." Hughes advised King to "get a job at sea where you can do some of the drudgery of the service." This salvage operation was exactly what he needed.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 72-74. The submariners wrote to the flight school instructors telling them to fail King because he would "upset naval aviation" like he did submarines. The school promised the Navy that they would grade based on merit only and not the reputation of the senior officers and King graduated, earning his "wings".

⁷⁵ Ibid., 78. Due to the winter storms, the water was too rough for salvage operations and the delay caused the crew to die before they could get to them. King supervised the raising and return to port of the submarine. Again King was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal (his second.) The CNO reported that King had received several votes on the recent flag officer selection board, though he was still too young (50 years old).

⁷⁶ Ibid., 79-87. King's executive officer said "King was always eager to try anything new; it was hell to work for him, every operation would have to be done on the double. Still, he got results. He always did." Few could survive King. Those that did, earned his respect. King said, "I don't care how good they are, unless they get a kick in the ass every six weeks, they slack off."

⁷⁷ Ibid., 89, 92-93. King continued his partying ways when not on duty with his officers. They actually grew to like him ashore and when they were drunk would challenge him. After they would become sober, they would be scared. Fortunately, he never held it against them. King once said, "You ought to be very suspicious of anyone who won't take a drink or doesn't like women." He had a way with women and had a reputation for many extra marital affairs. King, while being forbearing and a "screamer," was extraordinarily kind to his junior officers where it counted: on their fitness reports and in recommending them for assignments. Many "screamer" officers, even today, usually treat their officers well with their fitness reports and recommendations because it appears that they believe if the officer can survive the daily abuse, they have earned it. King treated his officers like sons and his crew like his children. He tolerated his officer's excesses in gambling and drinking probably because of the way he was in his youth. He deplored Captain's Mast and would often award severe punishments, then reduce them the next day. Holding mast always depressed and tired him out because he was "punishing his children."

⁷⁸ This and the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation (the job Nimitz had before World War II) were the two choice assignments for new flag officers that lead to senior flag rank.

⁷⁹ After two years, King was promoted to Vice Admiral and received the job because he was the only one eligible. He relieved Vice Admiral Horne who went to the General Board in Washington to await retirement. Clearly this job was not on the path to becoming the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), which was King's major goal after making Admiral.

⁸⁰ King wanted to be either CNO or Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet. He believed that since he served in all three branches of the Navy and had the Bureau job in Washington that his record would stand for itself.

⁸¹ Leahy and Swanson were not fond of King, and King was not well known by Roosevelt. They chose Rear Admiral Stark as the next CNO.

⁸² Ibid., 117-119.

⁸³ Edison recommended to FDR that King be given command of the fleet to prepare the Navy for any future wars. FDR believed the many rumors that King drank too much and decided against it.

⁸⁴ During this period of history, officers would be promoted from Captain (O-6) to Rear Admiral (two stars). One star Admirals only existed in wartime and were called Commodores. From two star rank, any promotion beyond that would be tied to the job they were going to. Prior to retirement, the Admiral would revert back to two star rank and be transferred to the General Board in Washington DC. Of note, when the 5 star rank of Fleet Admiral was created to match the ranks of the Allies during World War II, Congress wrote into law that these new Fleet Admirals would never retire and would always be subjected to recall until their death. Many in the Navy were surprised King was in this assignment given his previous commands of aircraft carrier forces and his stature in the Navy. He took these worn-out old ships isolated from the fleet and whipped them into combat-ready shape. His efforts to ready the fleet for combat, often against the will of the commanding officers under him, did not go unnoticed and aided in getting the fleet ready for war.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 129-134. King learned that the new Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, would inspect the Caribbean force and most importantly, this would allow the two to become acquainted. King arranged for a sightseeing tour for the Secretary and stayed by his side the entire time. The new Secretary was impressed with King's accomplishments. King issued two written orders to get his new command combat-ready: "Exercise of Command – Excess of Detail in Orders and Instructions," and "Exercise of Command – Correct Use of Initiative." He impressed upon Secretary Knox that there was still too much "business as usual" in the Atlantic Fleet. The Secretary agreed. With Europe already at war, in 1941, the Commander in Chief U.S. Fleet (CINCUS) was divided into CINC Atlantic, Pacific, and Asiatic. King learned he would be CINCLANT and receive four stars. Knox congratulated him and encouraged him "to correspond and maintain the closest possible relationship." King's flagship, the cruiser AUGUSTA, took President Roosevelt to the Atlantic Conference with Winston Churchill along with the CNO, Admiral Stark during 1941.

⁸⁶ Though it became increasingly difficult for King who wanted total control, Stark and King tried to separate their jobs. King began to advise Roosevelt on naval activities and the President acquired an appreciation for King. By March 1942, King had a hard time functioning with Stark as the CNO. He complained to Secretary Knox and the President.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 179. When Roosevelt signed the order on March 12, 1942, it made King the most powerful naval officer to date.

⁸⁸ The Chief of Naval Operations' home was at the Naval Observatory on Massachusetts Avenue in northwest Washington, D.C. After 1974, the house became the home of the Vice President of the United States, and the CNO moved to Tingey House at the Washington Navy Yard.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 231.

⁹⁰ FADM King was better discussing issues with Congress one-on-one behind closed doors, than testifying in a question and answer format before a committee.

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